

police back. The consequences of depolicing extend far beyond the violence that “defund the police” rhetoric inspires. It extends beyond criminals emboldened to commit crimes like murder and armed carjackings.

We have all seen the images of a California train yard littered with opened boxes as far as the eye can see. Train robberies are up by 160 percent in Los Angeles County, and that is just over the past year. The Governor of California compared the scenes to a Third World country. I have seen them, and I agree with the Governor of California.

Organized retail crime is out of control. Criminals rely on the lack of active policing to commit large-scale theft. According to the National Retail Federation, 69 percent of retailers say that they have had an increase in theft in the last year, and 78 percent say more law enforcement would help stop the crimes of retail theft.

Why would people not expect more law enforcement? Everybody knows that government is established for the public safety, among other reasons, but that is foremost.

It still isn't a secret what liberal cities need to do to keep crime out of their cities, out of their railways, out of their subways, out of their streets, and out of their stores. Send police where the crime happens. Tell the police to arrest criminals. Prosecute those criminals. Do not release dangerous criminals out on bail. It is a very simple and effective way to reduce the amount of crime.

Do you know what won't work? Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle think that the solution is gun control, but here is the issue: Gun control won't stop a criminal from pushing an innocent victim in front of a subway, let alone keep a criminal from obtaining an illegal gun.

The real problem is enforcement by the police. The crime spike began in June 2020 when blue cities nationwide pulled the police off their streets, progressive prosecutors at that time stopped prosecuting, and these blue cities started bail reform policies that released violent criminals into the street. No police on the streets but a lot of criminals on the streets—it is no surprise that crime has risen.

The problems are depolicing, political—progressive prosecution, and ineffective bail policies. Blue city mayors depoliced until some realized that was a bad, bad decision to make.

This liberal attitude toward criminality may now have a light at the end of the tunnel. It seems to be changing for the better.

Just two or three examples: New York City's new mayor, Eric Adams, announced that he would revive a plainclothes anticrime unit to combat the violence, and he is also suggesting better bail policies. A couple of months ago, we heard San Francisco Mayor London Breed declare a state of emergency over crime in her city. And then, maybe a month ago, we saw Chicago

Mayor Lori Lightfoot ask for Federal resources to fight crime.

The Nation's crime spike is the result of less law enforcement. Criminals are feeling bold—very bold—because they know they will go uncaught and, if uncaught, unpunished.

Far-left mayors need to use a simple solution with a very proven record of success. They need to bring police back to our streets and keep the criminals off of our streets.

(Mr. MURPHY assumed the Chair.)

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

On another matter, Mr. President, I want to talk about high drug prices.

Three years ago, I began a bipartisan effort to lower prescription drug costs. And that isn't just a Chuck Grassley issue; that is a bipartisan issue.

Following, first, Finance Committee hearings that I chaired, bipartisan negotiations, and a bill markup, I introduced with the senior Senator from Oregon a bill that we call Grassley-Wyden—but I don't care if it is called Wyden-Grassley. The point is the Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act will go a long way to stop the massive increase we have in drug prices. We passed this bill out of the Finance Committee on a bipartisan vote of 19 to 9. I have never stopped working to advance a bipartisan, negotiated, and balanced drug pricing bill.

Drug prices are rising, and more Americans are having a harder time paying these high costs for prescription drugs. AARP says brand-name drugs that seniors use are going up at more than twice the rate of inflation. New data from another source, the National Health Interview Survey, estimates that 3.5 million seniors had difficulty affording their medication.

I hear stories about rising drug costs all the time at my 99 county meetings. We have a Q&A at every one of those meetings so people can bring up any subject they want to bring up. They set the agenda, and always prescription drug pricing is on that agenda. The people probably asking the question, “What are we going to do about prescription drug pricing?” are probably the very same ones who are being hit by these high prices, and they notice the big increase in prices from year to year.

As an example, Iowans tell me about the rising cost of their insulin or how they worry about paying for out-of-pocket costs in the doughnut hole. No matter how you look at it, drug costs are going up, and Americans are paying more.

For 12 months, President Biden and the Democratic majority has focused on a partisan reckless tax-and-spending spree, and they have not made any progress in passing drug pricing reform as part of their partisan proposal. I compliment them for trying to do something about drug pricing, but it hasn't happened yet, and the way you get things done in the U.S. Senate is by doing it in a bipartisan way.

By every public account, the talks in the other party on their agenda have

stalled. In fact, as best evidence of this, just this very day, the senior Senator from West Virginia said that the Democrat bill is—this is his word—“dead.”

So instead of spending more time on bills that do not have votes, we could pass bipartisan legislation to lower drug costs this very day. It would have a meaningful impact on lowering prescription drug costs. Let's not waste another minute.

So the Grassley-Wyden bill or the Wyden-Grassley bill remains our best chance to lower prescription drug costs in a bipartisan manner, and I urge my colleagues to work with me to pass this bill.

I will give you just some examples—probably only a half dozen out of 27 major pieces it has in it.

No. 1, it caps out-of-pocket costs at \$3,100. And I will have to give it to the Democrat proposal; they have reduced that down to \$2,000. I am willing to negotiate 3,100 or 2,000.

Secondly, it eliminates the doughnut hole.

Third, it caps rising drug prices in Medicare at the inflation price index.

Four, the bill ends uncapped taxpayer-funded subsidies for Big Pharma.

Five, it brings more sunshine, more competition, and more oversight to how Big Pharma prices drugs in the first place.

Lastly, out of 2,700 sections in this bill, I want to say it saves \$72 billion for seniors and \$95 billion for taxpayers.

In addition to this bill, I have four prescription drug bills that have passed the Judiciary Committee with unanimous support. So, obviously, all four of those are bipartisan bills.

These four bills bring more competition, let more affordable drugs come to the market, and end anticompetitive behavior by Big Pharma.

I urge my colleagues to work with me to pass bipartisan drug pricing reform today.

I will end by saying that, maybe early in the new administration, I had a telephone conversation with President Biden on the subject of drugs. He sent his legislative staff up here to meet with me on the subject. And I pointed out what they were trying to do, as I just pointed out to my colleagues today. They wanted to do it a different way; it doesn't seem to be getting traction. So I said to the President's staff—and I said to the President himself: You might want to take a look at this bipartisan bill, probably move it.

BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION

Mr. President, the other thing is—on another subject, but just a short statement. I had a chance within the last 3 hours to meet with another Senator with the President of the United States down at the White House on another subject.

But at the end of that meeting, I complimented the President on his Executive order—I think, of last June—in which he mandated to all agencies of

government: Do everything you can to make sure there is competition working in our free marketplace. And at that point, he suggested a bipartisan bill that I have dealing with meatpacking and animal—beef—slaughter. So I told him today that maybe we can work on that piece of legislation, as well, in a bipartisan way.

So I could point out three issues that I have moving with Democrats that could be brought up now. I will bet every one of the 99 Senators in here have bipartisan bills that they could be working on, and we ought to start that process going if we are going to have success for the year of 2022.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, notwithstanding rule XXII, at 5 p.m. today all postcloture time on the Ruiz nomination expire; and that following the confirmation vote, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on the Puttagunta, Lopez, and Staples nominations in the order listed, without intervening action of debate; further, that if cloture is invoked on any of the nominations, the confirmation votes be at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. I want to notify all Senators that they should expect four rollcall votes beginning at 5 p.m.

UKRAINE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there is a photograph that we have all seen: six battle-weary victorious marines raising the American flag on Iwo Jima. It is one of the most iconic photos of World War II.

It was taken 77 years ago this month. Among those six brave marines was a coal miner's son from western Pennsylvania. His name was Sgt Michael Strank. At 25 years of age, he was the oldest of the six flag raisers. The men in his rifle squad idolized him. One of them said: "He was the kind of Marine you read about, the kind they make movies about."

Sergeant Strank used to tell his men: "Follow me and I'll try to bring you all home safely to your mothers."

One week after he raised the American flag atop Mount Suribachi, Michael Strank was killed in the Battle of Iwo Jima. He was the first of the six flag raisers to die.

Today, he is buried among America's heroes in Arlington National Cemetery, but that is not the end of the story.

In 2008, a Marine security guard based at the U.S. Embassy in Slovakia discovered that Michael Strank was not a natural-born U.S. citizen; he had received his citizenship through his fa-

ther when his father became a U.S. citizen in 1935. So where was this marine's marine born? He was the first child born into an ethnic Ukrainian family in what is now Slovakia. Like my own mother, who was born in Lithuania, Michael Strank came to America with his mother as a toddler, as soon as his father could save the money for their passage.

Those who were there that day on Iwo Jima will remember that a loud cheer went up from thousands of marines when they saw, finally, that red, white, and blue of the U.S. flag flying over the highest peak on that island. They knew that that day, in the war between freedom and tyranny, freedom had won.

Today, almost 80 years later, the battle between freedom and tyranny continues, and one of its new flash points is Ukraine. The Ukrainian people have made it clear: They want to be free and independent. They want to chart their own future. They want to choose their own leaders through elections that they conduct.

This is the future that more than 92 percent of Ukrainians chose in a referendum in 1991, after Ukraine declared its independence from the crumbling and corrupt Soviet Union, but Russian President Vladimir Putin—the old KGB agent—refuses to acknowledge Ukraine's right to exist, its right to independence, and its right to self-determination.

For almost 100 days, from November 2013 to January 2014, the Ukrainian people waged a "Revolution of Dignity" to force from office a corrupt, Russian-backed, puppet President—and they won. In retaliation, Russia invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula and parts of eastern Ukraine and installed a Russian-friendly government. This forceful occupation of parts of Ukraine by Russia marked the first time, the first time since World War II ended, that one nation had redrawn the map of Europe by force.

For the last 8 years, Russia has tried relentlessly to destabilize the democratically elected Government in Ukraine. This is part of the reason that President Trump's efforts to withhold congressionally approved military aid for Ukraine in order to extract political favors was egregious. Now, Putin has amassed more than 120,000 Russian soldiers on the borders of Ukraine. Whether Putin is driven by megalomaniacal delusions of restoring the Soviet Union or is simply seeking to create chaos and sow dissension among NATO allies is unclear, but here is what is clear: A Russian invasion of Ukraine would constitute a grave assault not only on Ukraine, but on the institutions and agreements that have kept peace in Europe for almost 75 years.

A Russian invasion of Ukraine also could be seen as a danger to our NATO allies in Poland and in the courageous young Baltic democracies in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. It would be a cat-

astrophic mistake on Putin's part, and President Biden has made that point over and over.

Chicago is home to one of the largest Polish communities outside of Warsaw, the largest Lithuanian community outside of Vilnius, and one of the largest Ukrainian communities outside of Kyiv. More than 46,000 Ukrainian Americans live in the Chicago area, the third largest Ukrainian community in the United States.

A week ago, I attended a celebration at the Cultural Center in Chicago, on Chicago Avenue in Ukrainian Village. Also speaking at that gathering was Oksana Markarova, Ukraine's Ambassador to the United States. I can tell you, the Polish and Lithuanian communities in Chicago were there standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine—and with the people of Poland, Lithuania, and the Baltic to decide their own futures.

Vladimir Putin and his henchmen should know that the United States, NATO, and the entire community of democracies also believe that it is the right exclusively of Ukraine and other young democracies to protect their territorial boundaries and decide their own fate. The United States made its position clear yesterday in the U.N. Security Council. Ukraine, the United States, NATO, and the entire community of democracies all want a diplomatic solution to Russia's threats on Ukraine. That is what we seek. If Vladimir Putin wants to avoid a debacle that will cost his nation dearly in lives and treasure, he will agree to this solution.

I commend President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, and their teams for their strong support of Ukrainian independence and against Russian aggression. The Biden administration has provided significant military equipment for our Ukrainian friends to ensure that President Putin knows the price that a further invasion will cost. The administration has also bolstered the defense capabilities of our NATO partners in Poland and the Baltics. And if Putin is counting on partisan division in the Senate to weaken America's resolve to defend Ukraine and its neighbors, he is mistaken.

Yesterday, Senator GRASSLEY and I introduced a bipartisan resolution celebrating 100 years of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Baltic States and reaffirming our close relationship with these young democracies. Later this week, Senator SHAHEEN and I and several of our colleagues, from both parties, will meet with the Baltic and Polish Ambassadors to reaffirm U.S. support for their nations.

I hope that we will also see strong, bipartisan support for legislation that is being drafted by Senators MENENDEZ and RISCH, the chair and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That bill will impose severe, crippling economic sanctions on